



manufacturing dreams

Words: Everett True

The ones to watch at London's annual **Raindance film festival**

Summer Scars

Being Michael Madsen

dir Michael Mongillo, Mean Time, 88 mins

Smart, sarcastic documentary spoof centred round the *Reservoir Dogs* hard man actor, and his reactions to the actions of paparazzi photographer Billy Dant. Madsen, goaded beyond reason by Dant's celebrity stalking, decides to turn the tables upon Dant, and hires a documentary crew to unearth the dirt on his nemesis. Whether you enjoy it or not kind of hinges upon whether you're a fan of Madsen's laconic style, and also of 'reality' TV, but this is a surprisingly engaging and incisive film.

This Is Nollywood

dir Franco Sacchi, Centre Fort Digital Imaging, 56 mins

Despite street thugs demanding protection money, electricity failures, all-day prayer sessions that mean nothing else can take place while they happen, limited budgets (\$20,000) and time (nine days), leading actors who are making three films simultaneously and lack of technology, Nigerian film director Bond Emeruwa is determined to finish his full-length action feature on schedule. We follow him, though a fascinating, in-depth look at 'Nollywood', Nigeria's flourishing film industry, to unearth an entirely different portrait of Africa to the one usually portrayed over here. "I cannot tell the white man's story," explains Bond. "I don't know what his story is all about. He tells me his story in his movies. I want him to see my stories too." Humorous, deprecating and in places absurdly surreal; highly recommended.

Exhibit A

dir Dom Rotheroe, Bigger, 85 mins

The device is somewhat clichéd: a family tragedy, set in an everyday suburban Yorkshire street, told through the lens of the teenage daughter's video camera, filmed in a jumpy 'naturalistic' style (in reality, home movie footage is far more meandering and less edited than this). Dad doesn't get the raise he hoped for, so he can't pay his bills, so instead of telling his wife and family he slowly turns psycho – that's the basic premise. It's diverting enough – like Jude Law's *Final Cut* meets *The Blair Witch Project*, with some *You've Been Framed*-style content thrown in for additional irritation factor. But the device of having spoof news reports to trail the film is rather old hat, don't you think?

John Waters: This Filthy World

dir Jeff Garlin, Filthy World, 85 mins

Stand-up is weird. It's a weird format, I mean. Why would anyone pay money to watch a 'comedian' reaffirm your prejudices from on stage, when a conversation would be far preferable? But fuck it. Queen of camp, film director John Waters (*Cry Baby*, *Pink Flamingos*) is a total gem: he doesn't hold back from obscure references or bad language, taking us through his life and past and future projects (fisting,

Baltimore and mum and dad included) with barely a pause; delivered in typically droll, fake wide-eyed manner for over an hour-and-a-half of scintillating, pulsating and rather naughty banter.

Twenty To Life: The Life And Times Of John Sinclair

dir Steve Gebhardt, MVD, 96 mins

John Sinclair is a poet provocateur, an American counter-cultural warrior; former manager of the MC5; thrown inside for 10 years for possessing two marijuana joints; subject of a John Lennon song and 'freedom concert'; bearded and beatnik, reciting his tales of insurgence and revolt in declamatory fashion over some stunning contemporary blues and jazz outfits; the man who coined the "Rock 'n' roll is a tool of the cultural revolution" slogan (a phrase he stopped believing in around 1973), now working for Amsterdam internet radio. . . former high priest of *High Times*, community organiser, chairman of the White Panthers. . . what's not to like? This fascinating, 16-years-in-the-making, documentary takes us through the considerable highs and lowdown lows of a life wonderfully misspent. Documentaries usually hinge upon the characters of those featured, and characters don't come much more fully defined than Mr Sinclair.

Summer Scars

dir Julian Richards, Prolific, 80 mins

Excellent coming-of-age movie, simply and superbly told: six 14-year-old Welsh kids bunk off school to play in the woods, accidentally running over (on a stolen motorbike) a mysterious drifter. Events rapidly spiral out of control as the drifter first befriends, and then controls, the gang. The children are forced to make a series of unsavoury yet life-changing choices, forced upon them by the manipulative grown-up (played with consummate creepiness by Kevin Howarth. Imagine *Stand By Me*, with some horror thrown in: really, really fine.

Manufacturing Dissent: Uncovering Michael Moore

dir Rick Caine/Debbie Melnyk, Liberation, 97 mins

Couple of would-be radical documentary-makers decide to trail counter-culture hero Michael Moore on the anti-Bush election trail during the making of one of Moore's own documentaries, and discover that he isn't perfect after all. Um. . . and your point is what, exactly?

Raindance offers a selection of independent cinema from across the globe, with the emphasis on emerging talent. This year's jury includes ex-Clash guitarist Mick Jones, Iggy Pop and The Independent film critic Anthony Quinn. The festival runs from 25 September to 7 October in London's West End. www.raindance.co.uk



No Restraint

dir Matthew Barney, Agnès B, 72 mins

Matthew Barney owes a lot of his career to Vaseline. The artist was discovered by New York gallery-owner Barbara Gladstone in the early Nineties, shortly after graduating from Yale – she saw his use of petroleum jelly as sculptural material, turned into an other-worldly, ice-cold structure in his basement. Since then, Barney's use of unconventional, bodily fluid-referencing media has become a regular signature in his work, including the acclaimed *Cremaster Cycle*. It also informs his latest production, *Drawing Restraint 9*.

No Restraint, an accompanying piece filmed in November 2004, is both a 'making of' documentary about Barney's *DR9* and an insight into the mind of one of contemporary art's enigmatic creatives.

For *DR9*, Barney set sail aboard Japanese whaling vessel the *Nisshin Maru*, complete with camera crew and partner Björk in tow, in order to film a fantastical, oblique love story. Unfolding on the whaling ship, it offers both an imaginative play on Japanese culture and a mysterious tale of ancient ritual, conjuring up a world somewhere between Narnia, *Pan's Labyrinth* and a mariner's folk tale, all set against the industrial backdrop of Japan's whale trade. With Barney and Björk playing the role of The Guests on board the ship, the narrative explores themes of disintegration and rebirth, with their characters finally succumbing to the sea, and metamorphosing into whale-like creatures.

As for the Vaseline – this time it involved Barney carrying 45,000 lb of petroleum jelly on board the whaling ship, and pouring it into a giant metal mould, which made a focal point for the film. Once out on the cold ocean, the vat of jelly set, the metal frame was removed, leaving a vast, whale-shaped blancmange, which was then used on set, both in a symbolic whole, and as part of the more abstract landscape.

Drawing Restraint 9 builds on Barney's desire to make work within a set of parameters, and whereas previously this might have entailed the 'restraint' of his own physical action, for *DR9*, the stakes seem higher. The 'restraint' is found in the massive ambition of the project, coupled with the restrictive environment – the boat – within which it is created.

If all this sounds a bit impenetrable and esoteric, *No Restraint* offers an intriguing, humanising way in to Barney's work, and acts as an effective foil to the intense, sometimes perplexing, experience of watching his own creations. Whilst his works are surreal and enigmatic, they also offer some of the most visually staggering filmic sequences conceived in experimental filmmaking, and seduce and perplex in their narrative mystery.

In *No Restraint*, we are also offered an insight into the production process of Barney's creations; the special effects and prosthetic costumes, the clash of cultures when American artist meets Japanese fisherman, Björk's music-making process. That Barney is in fact a likeable, humorous individual, previously a professional sportsman and fashion model, with a childhood based in Idaho, all contribute to this surprisingly warm portrait of an artist.

Matthew Barney exhibits at the *Serpentine Gallery* until 11 November

Emma Pettit